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ABSTRACT

Oral interpretation of translated Chinese poetry is both difficult and audacious. However, non-native readers are less bound by the Chinese literary canon than native readers and therefore are more free to develop their personal taste and discover new modes of expression. As a result, these performers are potentially ideal translators of Chinese poetry for Western audiences. This potential can be realized through the use of metaphoric movement in the performance of classical Chinese poetry. Certain poems could best be performed using group movement because of its potential for exploration of conflict. For the poem, "Facing the Snow," the poet could be represented by two performers, one speaking and one moving, in order to highlight the movement from observation to internalization. For the poem, "Painted Falcon," the interplay between stillness and surface could be depicted by separating the poet/observer and the falcon into two performers. Finally, for the poem, "Night in the House by the River," the tonal movement of the Chinese language could be evoked using synthesizer sounds. A sensitive embodiment of classical Chinese poetry using metaphoric movement and sound can make the works as much a living presence for twentieth century Western audiences as they were for eighth century Chinese readers. (Texts of the three poems are included.) (SRT)

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RELEASING THE DRAGONS: PERFORMANCE OF CHINESE POETRY IN TRANSLATION

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Pullman, WA

1986 SCA Convention

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Translation is an audacious act. A poet presumes to make the rhythm and sense of an aesthetic experience and cultural worldview meaningful in an entirely different language and cultural context. Many translators say they acknowledge the impossibility of translation, but do it anyway. If it is audacious for a poet to translate a poem from a primary source, it is doubly so for the interpreter who works at a second remove, translating the poet's translation from the page to the stage. But a little audacity may serve both the poet and performer well, according to Chinese critic and translator James Liu. While non-native readers must overcome cultural and linguistic barriers in reading Chinese poetry, they are less bound by the Chinese literary canon and therefore more free to develop personal taste, judgment, and to discover new poets, poems and modes of expression.[1] The non-native performer and audience of Chinese poetry enjoys yet another advantage: experiencing the work as a living presence embodied in performance. This may be the greatest advantage of all for Westerners who wish to experience and appreciate Chinese poetry, for Liu believes:

> The modern Western reader of Chinese poetry, whether in the original or in translation, should be made aware that Chinese poetry, is not an exotic object of antiquarian interest only, but something alive that has important things to say to him about the world in which he lives. Unlike some Western Sinologists who apparently think that classical Chinese poetry should be treated like King Tut's treatises, to be kept in a museum and admired from

> a distance but not touched, I wish Chinese poetry to be read, handled, and loved as a living presence.[2]

Because interpreters "handle" work in the most literal way, they have the potential of being ideal translators of Chinese poetry for Western audiences. This study explores how interpreters can realize this potential through the use of metaphoric movement in the performance of classical Chinese poetry. Chinese poetry is both essentialist and existentialist, concentrating on conveying the essence of an object or experience rather than its details and focusing on actual living experience rather than on Platonic ideals. This essentialism is implicit in many aspects of Chinese life and art. Since metaphoric movement is also based on distilling essentials it may be the perfect vehicle for conveying the spirit of Chinese poetry. Furthermore, since Chinese philosophy and art is built on a concept of interplay among balanced oppositions and tensions, metaphoric movement offers a means of illuminating vital tensions in the structure of works that might not be evident to the Western readers. By first examining how tensions and movement are latent in Chinese poetic calligraphy, themes, parallel structure, and circumstances of composition, and then showing how metaphoric movement could enrich specific poems, interpreters may be encouraged to attempt their own translations of Chinese works, thus rendering them living

presences. Works by the poet Tu Fu, a luminary of the eighth century T'ang dynasty, the golden age of Chinese classical poetry, have been selected as examples.

Certain features of Chinese language have influenced English translations and hence, English readers' impressions of Chinese poetry. Chinese poetry in literal translation is extremely condensed in comparison to English. For example, the line "branch end hibiscus flowers" might be translated, "At the end of the branches, the hibuscus flowers." Additionally, Chinese nouns lack indications of number or person and the verbs lack indication of tense. The net effect of these characteristics is a kind of universality and timelessness of experience. One result of the condensation in Chinese poetry is that the relationships between words are more indeterminate than in English.[3] The language is richly ambiguous and the reader is required to supply more of the poem's meaning. Some translators, such as the Imagists, overreacted to the brevity of Chinese poetry and produced a kind of pidgen English which is unnatural and does nothing to reveal the individual qualities of a poet or a poem. Even if a translator resists the reductiveness of an overly literal translation, he/she will discover that an English translation of Chinese is inevitably longer and more specific than the original due to the more determinate character of English. The very act of English translation seems to rob Chinese

poetry of some of its distilled, essentialist quality. The same richness caused by the indeterminacy of word relationships is latent in the relationships between the signs of Chinese characters, and is necessarily lost in English romanization and translation. Chinese script is ideographic, and originally began as one character representing one word or idea. As the language developed, complex characters were created. For example, the character for "brightness" is a combination of the characters for "sun" and "moon." The entire writing system is built upon interconnected strokes which unite and intertwine meanings. Francois Cheng explains:

> The codified meaning of each sign never completely succeeds in repressing other, deeper meanings present within the sign. These are always ready to burst forth; and the full ensemble of the signs, formed according to the demands of equilibrium, and rhythm, reveals the many possibilities of these clusters of significant strokes: attitudes, movements, intentional sought contradictions, the harmony of opposites, and, finally, a whole manner of being.[7]

Such writing reveals language as a system that is not limited to denotative description of the world, but one which represents and actively organizes connections and provokes acts of signifying. Ideographic signs do not attempt to copy exterior reality, but instead represent it through essential strokes whose combination reveals latent meaning and hidden connections. This writing system, explains Cheng, and the

conception of sign inherent in it, led to an ensemble of signifying practices that includes poetry, calligraphy, painting and myth:

> It is not simply that the writing serves as a vehicle for all these practices, it is, even more, the single model active in the process of their constitution as systems. Inspired by the ideographic writing and determined by it, poetry, calligraphy, painting and myth form a semiotic network both complex and unified; all share in the same process of symbolization and obey certain fundamental rules of opposition. The language cannot be disengaged from the consideration of any one of these, to a generalized aesthetic. In China, the arts are not compartmentalized; an artist devotes himself to the tripartite practice of poetry-calligraphy-painting as to a complete art, one within which the spiritual dimensions of his being are exploited: linear song and spatial system, incantatory gesture and visualized words.[5]

Translating Chinese poetry from ideographic characters into romanized English, and then from printed English into performance, would appear to mean an irretrievable loss of this unified aesthetic of sign and signified. However, interpretation theorists have also noted the union of sign and signified in concrete poetry, and have found ways to maintain that union in performance.[6] Paul Gray suggests the use of audio visual effects such as slides or projections to restore the visual surface or sign of the poem in performance. [7] Chinese characters could certainly be projected or even painted on backdrops to serve as a reminder of the text during performance. However, Gray's suggestions

of using multiple performers to embody the tensions and oppositions inherent in the relationship between words and between sign and signified is especially suited to Chinese poetry, particularly if the performers use metaphoric movement. Chinese calligraphy and script do not stress the pictographic imitation of a form, but strive instead to express the form's inner reality, or what the Taoist painters called spiritual rhythm. Metaphoric movement, also built on essences distilled from larger or more specific movements which convey attitude or mood, is the very embodiment of spiritual rhtyhm. Chinese characters, like so many other things in Chinese cosmology, are built on an opposition and interplay between Yin, the symbol for the feminine principle of nonaction and Yang, the symbol for the masculine principle of action. This tension and interplay inherent in the characters themselves can be actualized in performance on the physical level through stylized tensions, releases and bodily attitudes assumed by the performers. Even though Western performers and audiences are unfamiliar with Chinese script, the elements of aesthetic unity and essential style will be preserved and will register on more accessible levels as well. Since the Chinese regarded script characters as living beings, the extension of these beings into living, moving performers seems the perfect means of translating the effect of calligraphy for Western audiences. The great seventh

century Taoist calligrapher Yu Shih-nan made remarks about calligraphy that apply equally well to evoking the spirit of calligraphy in performance:

> Grasping the essence of 10,000 things the characters are formed. To understand nature and its changes is to know the constant is ever-moving. The art of calligraphy is mystical and subtle. It bases itself upon the spiritual interfusion, not upon artificial exertion. It requires the enlightenment of one's mind but not sense perception. The form of the characters is what you take in with your eyes, but they have their limitations and obstructions. If one holds on to only the outer structure of the characters, one will be impeded by their material substance.[9]

The use of group metaphoric movement can clarify and illuminate tensions and resistances in Chinese poetry on the structural level as well. These tensions reside on the levels of theme, the opposition between the lyric self and the world, the treatment of forbidden topics, the interplay between surface voice and emotional depth, and the basic parallel couplet structure.

One of the important differences between Chinese and English poetry, and one of the sources of tension in Chinese work, concerns the presumed fictionality of poems. Chinese readers did not view poems as fictional, but as unique factual accounts of a particular experience in historical time. This is due partially to the circumstances surrounding

poetic composition. Poems were often composed on social occasions such as parties and official banquets, and were often addressed to actual persons and situations. In the T'ang era, poetry was composed and read by a very small segment of Imperial society, those propertied and tied to the central government. This bond with the government was bolstered by Confucianism which emphasized order, stability, and service to the state. However, Chinese poets often believed in several systems of thought simultaneously, and while they accepted the state service imposed on them by Confucianism, they were also influenced by Taoism and Buddhism. These philosophies held that the world was governed by impermanence and flux which required man to live in harmony with nature to assure his survivial. Chinese poetry is animated by the tensions resulting from the poet's mediation between these two competing values, public and private.

The imperial government's assertion of the supremacy of public values in the form of state service, was evident in its very method of selecting civil servants, the imperial examinations. This rigorous test required candidates to demonstrate proficiency in poetic composition and theory, an unusual criteria for the selection of civil servants. Stephen Owen offers a provocative explanation for this practice. He asserts that the government's requirement of

verse composition to obtain civil service positions was a kind of loyalty oath for candidates, a statement of the supremacy of state service over private concerns. Such an assertion of loyalty was most important for screening candidates ,such as sons of lower provincial families, who weren't already bound up in the state value system. Through mastery of the formal embodiments of imperial ideology in exam verse, candidates proved they could adopt the imperial cosmology. These ideological elements appear in non-examination verse as well and include poetically legitimate sentiments, attention only to authorized aspects of the outer world, and to parallelism of rhetorical amplification which teach that all objects and events belong in a system of received relations. Since Chinese poets were also civil servants, the influence of governmental values and ideology in their work is subtle but persistent. According to Owen, even poetry which appears to be free of examination rules actually obeys them below the surface level, or denies the rules in acceptable ways. These rules of acceptability extended to the very subjects of poems. Subjects which would place private passions or interests above state concerns were taboo; such subjects included family or clan ties, sexual passion, personal hatreds, and private economic interests. When these subjects were treated, it was in an acceptably oblique manner which diluted the impact of the passion, thus

making it less threatening to state concerns. If a poet wished to rebel, there were state authorized terms such as "reclusion." A great deal of reclusive poetry was written during the T'ang era. Some poets voluntarily sought reclusion to escape the demands of court, and some were exiled for displeasing the emperor. There were poets who genuinely wished to withdraw from the world and assume a more contemplative lifestyle. For others, however, the theme of reclusion offered the only means of dissension against the service imperative. Owen explains the function of poetry from the government's viewpoint: "The authorized theme of 'reclusion' effectively kept a person from affirming the priority of any social organization other than the central government. In the poetic ideology there were only two situations a person could conceivably desire--to serve the central government or to live as a 'recluse', a private alternative to state service in which one found 'peace of mind.'"[9]

Ultimately, says Owen, the imperial system thrived because it was linked to the Chinese concept of the universe as a hierarchy of correlatives. Subordination of personal interests to those of the state, or loyalty to the emperor is a correlative of loyalty to father and kin:

> Correlative links cannot be seen to come simply from the state's needs: they must be believed. As a symbolic act of loyalty to the state, the poem affirms this principle of order and makes it manifest. The parallel couplet, the structured description of a landscape, the presumption of meaning incarnate in the world--all these formal patterns and conventions of figuration carry the secret message, 'I believe in the universal and eternal valdiity of the cosmic-imperial system.'[10]

Tensions and oppositions exist at every level of Chinese poetry; the circumstances of composition which demand adherence to conventional forms even for dissent, the pressure of competing personal and public interests and semiotic interplay in the script. But nowhere is the tension and the belief in correlatives greater than in the parallel couplet structure of the poem itself.

Mastery of the art of reading the parallel couplet is essential to reading Chinese poetry. The Chinese believed in a universe composed of balanced oppositions, Yin and Yang, and in the principle of correlatives as revealing essentials concealed in the universe, resulted in a poetry based on antithetical juxtapositions which reveal the true nature of things. In strict parallelism every word or phrase in one line of a couplet must be matched in the same position in the second line by a corresponding word in the same semantic category. The two lines must also be parallel in the broader, looser matching of "sense." Categorical and sense parallelism usually emerge as syntactic parallelism in

translation and there are instances of partial parallelism as well. The following Tu Fu couplet is strictly parallel:

Plains flow with sunlight, moving over the earth;
The river enters clouds as they cross the mountains.

This is an example of catetgorical parallelism. "Plains" and "river" are both topographical features of roughly equal status in the scene. Moreover, each word in each line matches a word in a corresponding position and the relationship of words within a line are roughly the same in both lines. "Move-on-earth" modifies "sun" while "cross-mountain" modifies "clouds". "Flow" and "enter" are both motions which initiate a sequence of motions as the eye enters the "flow" of the river, the sunlit earth, and moves off "into the clouds." "Flow" thus links "plain" and "sunlight as "enter" joins "river" to "clouds."

Couplets have their own unity and aesthetic value and were often the subject of criticism and discussion by Chinese literary scholars. Despite their integrity, they are, of course, part of the larger work and must be read against other couplets. The couplet, rather than the line or complete predicate, is the complete unit of thought or "sentence" of Chinese poetry. The couplet serves a special function in Chinese poetry which links it to the Chinese

cosmology discussed earlier. Owen observes: "A couplet mediates between reductive generalities and the most complex particulars of concealed relations. In the generalities, the established compounds, we recognize what is familiar; the concealed relations draw us to the excitement of fresh discovery."[11]

This antithetical structure works on the level of the entire poem as well. Couplets are balanced against other couplets, so that the poem consists of quatrain units. Such a structure evolved because poems were regarded as authentic presentations of experience. When Chinese lyric theorists described how experience became manifest in poetry, they discovered that poetic experience, like the natural world, possessed an antithetical structure. For every particular scene in the world there must be a subjective consciousness to perceive it, reflect on it, and respond to it. Out of this structure of experience came the structure of the poem which alternated between rhythms of scene and subjective response. As a result, Chinese poetry tends to exhibit a balanced ratio of couplets which follow a rather determined sequence. There will be a couplet describing a natural scene followed by a couplet where the poet responds to the scene, for example. The linear reading education of Western readers and the cryptic quality of literal English translations can make Chinese poems appear to be merely strings of independent

or loosely related statements. Real appreciation of the poetic unity in Chinese works is dependent upon the art of parallel reading and the art of construing couplets.

Equipped with an understanding of how Chinese poetry is animated by tensions and oppositions at the semiotic, historical, thematic and structural levels, the interpreter may begin to consider how these elements will be translated into the performance of specific poems. Tu Fu's "Facing the Snow" takes place in the winter of 756. The northeastern armies, under the command of general An Lu-shan have revolted against the imperial government and marched on the capital. The Emperor Hsuan Tsung has fled to the west and Tu Fu himself is now trapped in the fallen capital, unable to make his way through enemy lines to reach the loyalist T'ang forces. On November 17, the finest soldiers of the imperial forces, under the inept command of minister Fan Kuan, try to stop the enemy advance at Ch'n-T'ao, west of the capital, but the loyalists are horribly defeated. Remnants of the loyalist forces then rally once more, are joined by fresh imperial reserves, and mount another attack on the rebels at Ch'ing-fan, but are defeated once again. In the dead of winter, with loyalist hopes at a low ebb, Tu Fu, still trapped in the capital, sits facing the snow.

"Facing the Snow"by Tu Fu

Weeping of battle, many fresh ghosts,
Sadly chanting a poem, a lone old man.
Riotous clouds lower in sunset,
Swift, urgent snow dances in whirlwinds.
The dipper tossed aside, no rich color in the cup,
The brazier lasts on, its fire seems a red.
From several provinces news has been cut off--
I sit in sorrow now just tracing words in the air.[12]

trans. Stephen Owen

This examination of the poem's essentials provides the interpreter with clues concerning the staging of these essences in performance. The title itself gives a clue for structuring the performance. "Facing the Snow" implies opposition to the natural world, and as the rest of the poem makes clear, is done from the vantage of an interior position. The entire piece sets up a thematic opposition between inside and outside that corresponds to the essential structure of the Chinese lyric described earlier. In fact, so many poems exhibit the movement between the exterior world and interior response that it later became the largest structural subclass fo the Chinese lyric.

The poem opens with the poet gazing outside as "riotous clouds lower in sunset." These cloud formations resemble the configurations of the empire's fate, racked with civil war. However, Owen reminds us, these clouds are not metaphoric or symbolic, but are actual natural phenomena out in the sunset which pour snow on the poet. Chinese poets described the world and their response to it, but left the reader free to

make vital associations. These clouds are pouring in from the west, the scene of the conflict, darkening the atmosphere and closing off the horizon, surrounding the poet who is enclosed in the darkness of the room. Snow is falling outside, "swift and urgent", gusting hurriedly like troop movements and clashes of battle: within this natural disturbance there is the suggestion of a hidden pattern of dissolution like the chaos of battle.

This disintegration and disorder of the cosmos inherent in the storm is closing in on the poet--advancing on the barrier across which he faces the snow. The scene moves inside to the darkened room where the poet sits. It is now the darkest season of the year, and winter's cold suggests the very lowest point of this dark time. Black Yin is dominant, and conquered Yang flickers in the center of the embers still glowing in the brazier. In winter, the time of darkness, sorrowful men like Tu Fu need the glow of another fire--the warmth and forgetfulness of wine. The wine is gone now, but some of its warmth and comfort remain in the tiny fire glowing in the night.

This spark of light is the point of convergence for all the oppositions in the scene. Sitting before this ember the poet looks across the barrier between himself and the outside world. The tiny flame in the brazier is the interface

between darkness and light, cold and warmth, the potential of red flowers to come in the spring and the struggle of Yin and Yang in the stormy darkness. This pinpoint of light separates the observing self inside form the disintegrating world outside. Nothing goes out over the barrier; the poet cannot send any messages advising the armies to wait. Conversely, nothing can come in over this barrier; the poet cannot get news of the battle. Winter, the time of darkness and despair is not the time of action. The light suggests the promise of spring, and a change in fortunes for those who will wait.

The patterns of essential oppositions begin to emerge. The old poet of the first couplet is the self seen as object and thus belongs to the outer world. The gesture in the final line is a true first person response to the experience of the previous lines. The scenic focus of the poem shifts as well: from the horizon, to the window, to the room, to the poet himself, a process of internalization rendered through scenic movement. This movement of scene and sense of self suggests that the poem is an act of setting the self in relation to the world, an intense failed gesture of emotional response. The poet, "facing the snow," speaks to the disintegration of the empire and the cosmos, but cannot cross the boundaries of his world. He can only respond by tracing a message in the air which we cannot read, but we can sense. Tu Fu perceives

the latent meaning in the world surrounding him, but suppresses the urge to interpret it directly. Instead, he makes his comprehension of the world's meaning internal by responding to the external truth he observes. Owen explains:

> That act of suppression is the rule of the enigma: like the unreadable message written in air, enigma generates the energy of concealment which asks the reader to understand the poem. We readers perceive what he perceives; we know what he feels; between these two certainties, we try to penetrate the barrier of the self and know what he knows. As in the metaphorical mode of Western reading, manifest understanding is a goal that is eternally deferred: it lies at the end of an endless process of association and correlation that occurs in the reader's mind.[13]

One means of helping the audience make correlations and come to understand the poem is through the use of metaphoric movement. Since the poem is a structure of oppositions and pressures against barriers as the poet sets himself in relation to the disintegrating world, group movement with its potential for exploration of conflict would be an excellent means of performing this poem. The poet Tu Fu could be bifurcated into a speaking and a moving performer to highlight the movement from observation to internalization. In the first couplet, the two poets are inside "facing the snow," looking out across the spatial barrier that separates them from the outside world. Outside, four or five dancers dressed in black and white symbolizing the opposing forces of Yin and Yang and wearing short capes twist, grapple and turn

like the movements of snow, clouds, and the forces of battle and disintegration. Slowly, their chaos moves toward the poets, gradually surrounding the pair, creating a semicircular barrier. As they close in on the poets, the dancer-poet moves along the barrier confronting the forces, but is unable to break through. The dancer-poet and dancer-forces halt at the third couplet and focus on the ember, which could be a red light, or a dancer dressed in red curled in attitude on the floor. On the first line of the final couplet, the dancer-poet makes one more futile attempt to break through the outside barrier, then joins the speaking poet, embodying the completed act of internalizaton.

Movement from the exterior world to an interior one was a major structural force in many Chinese poems. Implied or suppressed movement was the structural princple governing another subclass of poems. Chinese poets were under tremendous pressure to write in a manner acceptable to the imperial regime. If a poet's rebellious feelings rose too close to the surface of his poems, he incurred tremendous personal risk. Since a poet had both a rebellious and a legitimate public voice within himself, the two opposing forces created a kind of immobility or equilibrium. The result was a sense of latent energy, of still violence beneath an imprisoning surface. A poem might say "I suffer bitterly," and the reader would sense an undercurrent of

forbidden emotional force, but it would be held in check, stilled. "To understand this strange stillness, we may consider its displacement onto something external, where, as in a fiction, the self may distantly observe its own precarious compensations with less painful interest. The emblem is conflict on a still plane."[14]

Some Chinese poems contain images of this surface-depth dichotomy. Still pools were the Buddhist metaphor for the perfected mind calmly reflecting the world's illusory phenomena. However, beneath these still pools the Chinese believed dragons lurked, symbolizing the murky depths of men's minds; the writhing passion suppressed by the flat surface. Tu Fu was fascinated by these flattened, dangerous creatures and was particularly attracted to paintings of birds of prey: birds whose survival required violent actions which were stilled and flattened by the painter's artistry. The very highest degree of artistry was to make the painted object come alive both in likeness and in animate force. In "Painted Falcon", the skill of the painter transforms a bird of prey into a chained creature fighting the very surface of the painting which gives it life.

Painted Falcon by Tu Fu

From plain white silk, wind and frost arise:
Grey falcon, the painting's work, wondrous.
It strains its body, desiring the crafty hare;
Casts sidelong glances, like a mournful nomad.

Beams from its tie-ring can be pinched between fingers;
Hung on column or rail, it stands ready for your call.
Oh when will it strike the common birds?--
Sprinkling feathers and blood on the weeds of the plain.

--Trans. Stephen Owen [15]

The artist's skill tranforms the white silk into the cold steppe country which is the falcon's habitat. The life force rises out of the painting, chilling the viewer who is transplanted to the cold regions in autumn, the hunting season. But the verisimilitude is too great for Tu Fu to bear, so he stops the illusion momentarily with praise, "the painting's work wondrous." Trapped betwen life and illusion the bird strains impatiently against the painting's surface, trying to break free and fulfill its violent nature. But this is violence on a still plane and in the straining absolute stillness and a powerfully mobile life force merge. Tu Fu imagines that the falcon's eyes move, "casting sidelong glances like a mournful nomad." "Nomad" personifies the falcon into the nomadic Tartar, also a resident of steppe lands, and representative of savagery in man. Such a powerful creature threatens to break free and intrude an alien violence into the calm world of the poet's aesthetic appreciation of the painting. So the poet counters the threat by assertively breaking the illusive spell, pinching the silk and reminding the readers that it is only a painting after all. It is the poet who is master here, for he can hang the bird anywhere and bid it kill on command. But, if

the bird is released, Tu Fu wonders if it will not fulfill its savage nature by destroying common birds. The violent, still figure emits a disdainful power, which, if liberated, will be felt by weaker creatures, including man. The viewers of the painting are safe, for the falcon will never be free. Still, the prospect of rebellious power simultaneously tantalizes and frightens people. The poet pinches the painting's silk to reassure himself that the beast is restrained. Poets, painters and viewers may learn to control the destructive beasts generated within the self, the dragons in the pool, but they are fascinated to see these beasts flattened. "There is a secretly savage and cruel pleasure in the powerfully civilized suppression of savage forces. We do not acknowledge the nature of that pleasure; we simply say,...'We loved your painting,' 'a very fine poem.'"[16]

The essential qualities to stage in this poem include the tension between art and life, the alternation between fascination and terror, and the struggle of violence against still surface. One approach to embodying the interplay between stillness and surface would be to bifurcate both the poet-observer and the falcon. The still falcon could be frozen in a threatening attitude with one leg on a box to suggest a perch with a frozen poet-observer looking on. The dancer poet and dancer falcon begin behind their respective counterparts while the poet-observer speaks the first

couplet. On the second couplet, the dancer poet and falcon emerge from behind their counterparts who remain frozen in tableaux. The dancer poet takes over the lines and the two dancing characters grapple with each other during the second couplet, each vying for dominance. In the third couplet, the dancer-poet gains control and freezes the dancer bird. With the bird restored to mere illusion, the observer poet delivers the final couplet. Another staging approach which would emphasize the individual's relationship with illusion and reality would be to treat the piece as a pax de deux for the poet and the falcon. The mesmerizing quality of the illusion could be reinforced by having the two characters begin the piece in a stare down: as the falcon and the illusion gain control in the second couplet, the falcon takes the lines and begins to bend and dominate the observer. in the third couplet the poet regains control, pinching the silk, thrusting the falcon back into the picture. The fourth couplet resumes the confrontative stare, with the knowledge of what the falcon will do if released. Finally, the stillness and surfce motif could be explored through the two dancer falcons being joined, perhaps back to back. One would struggle to break free and live while the other maintained the painting's surface quiet. The poet would move between the two, commenting.

In the final selection, "Night in the House by the River,"

Tu Fu returns to the exterior- to- interior scene structure.

Night in the House by the River by Tu Fu

It is late in the year;
Yin and Yang struggle
In the brief sunlight.
On the desert mountains
Frost and snow
Gleam in the freezing night.
Past midnight,
Drums and bugles ring out,
Violent, cutting the heart.
Over the Triple Gorge the Milky Way
Pulsates between the stars.
The bitter cries of thousands of households
Can be heard above the noise of battle.
Everywhere the workers sing wild songs.
The great heroes and generals of old time
Are yellow dust forever now.
Such are the affairs of men.
Poetry and letters
Persist in silence and solitude.

Trans. by Kenneth Rexroth [17]

This particular piece suggests the possibilties of metaphoric sound as well as movement. One of the distinctive elements of Chinese poetry which is sacrificed in English translation is its tonal system, its shift and movement between sounds. This poem contains the sound of war trumpets, "violent cutting the heart," and "the noise of battle." It would be possible to evoke the tonal movement of Chinese language through the use of synthesizer sounds. In the first three lines, we are in the season of autumn, the turning point between the lightness of summer and the darkness of winter. The promise of winter is close at hand,

already visible on the distant mountains. Under a black light, Yin and Yang dancers struggle for dominance. At midnight, the darkest hour, the order of the cosmos is shattered by war trumpets, represented by a synthesized, repetitive sound pattern. This sound pattern increases in volume and intensity as "bitter cries of thousands of households" are heard above the "noise of battle" expressed by the struggling dancers. While this action is progressing on one side of the stage, near the poet-speaker one dancer with a large Chinese character emblazoned on her leotard is performing slow, stylized movements. The sound and action on the other side of the stage reaches its peak on the line "Everywhere the workers sing wild songs," then suddenly the dancers freeze and the sound stops. The repetitive pattern is replaced by one single tone, played very softly, and the focus shifts to the solitary dancer. The great heroes are dust as are all men's affairs inevitably. "Poetry and letters persist in silence and solitude."

A sensitive embodiment of classical Chinese poetry using metaphoric movement and sound can make the works as much a living presence for twentieth century Western audiences as they were for eighth century Chinese readers. Awareness of the tensions inherent in Chinese poetry's script, structure, and composition allows interpreters to release the dragons that might otherwise remain trapped beneath the surface of an

unfamiliar language and culture.

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